

20th

CENTURY masters

THE BEST OF
BILL HALEY & HIS COMETS

The Millennium Collection



MCA

1. (We're Gonna) ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK
2. SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL
3. THIRTEEN WOMEN (And Only One Man In Town)
4. DIM, DIM THE LIGHTS (I Want Some Atmosphere)
5. RUDY'S ROCK
6. RAZZLE DAZZLE
7. THE SAINTS ROCK 'N' ROLL
8. SKINNY MINNIE
9. R-O-C-K
10. BURN THAT CANDLE
11. ROCK-A-BEATIN' BOOGIE
12. SEE YOU LATER, ALLIGATOR



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Bill
Haley



Bill Haley

& His Comets

were the first superstars of rock and roll. Although his stay at the top was relatively brief, Haley's contributions were fundamental. He escorted rock onto the nation's pop charts and into the living rooms of middle America, and it was Haley who provided teenagers of the '50s with their own alternative national anthem in "Rock Around The Clock." In 1955, influential disc jockey Alan Freed reportedly plucked the words "rock" and "roll" from Haley's "Rock-A-Beatin' Boogie" and helped to give the new music a name. In some ways

Haley was also a casualty of history, and many of the performers who rushed through the door he held open had supplanted him in popularity by decade's end. Nevertheless, the genial bandleader with the loud jackets and trademark spit curl bang managed to become a cultural icon in his day, and his best music has lost none of its considerable appeal after more than forty years.

He was born William John Clifton Haley in the Detroit suburb of Highland Park on July 6, 1925. As a youngster he was billed as the "Rambling Yodeler," and gained early experience performing with country and western bands in and around Chester, Pennsylvania. A job at local radio station WPWA exposed Haley to rhythm and blues, and he began incorporating these sounds into his act. He was recording as "Bill Haley and The Saddlemen" for the tiny Essex label when he changed his band's name to The Comets and scored his first national hit with "Crazy, Man, Crazy" in 1953. This success led to a contract with Decca Records the following year, where his debut single, with "Rock Around The Clock" as the B-side, sold modestly. It was followed by a cover rendition of Big Joe Turner's "Shake, Rattle & Roll" that became a gold record and a top ten hit. In 1955, "Rock Around The Clock" was revived in the soundtrack of the MGM film *Blackboard Jungle* and turned into an international phenomenon that is estimated to have sold over 20 million copies to date.

The glory years were at hand. Producer Milt Gabler, who had worked extensively with Louis Jordan, one of Haley's prime influences, had the good sense to record Haley and his Comets in a similar, concert-like environment at the fabled Pythian Temple in New York. The Comets underwent personnel changes, but by 1956 had coalesced into the classic line-up of Frank Beecher

on lead guitar; Billy Williamson on steel guitar; Al Rex on bass; Ralph Jones on drums; Johnny Grande on piano; and Rudy Pompilli on tenor sax, with Haley handling the rhythm guitar and vocals. In 1957, Haley & The Comets caused riots when they became the first visiting rockers to tour Britain. Their steady stream of hits lasted well into 1958.

Unfortunately, Haley began to look increasingly anachronistic as rock came to be personified by young rebels like Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis. An unwillingness to experiment beyond the tried and true formula that had brought his initial success didn't help matters. He left Decca by 1960 and for a while relocated to Mexico, where he remained quite popular. The enduring appeal of his music was strikingly illustrated when "Rock Around The Clock" returned to the top forty in both the U.S. and Britain in 1974, just seven years before Haley's untimely death from a heart attack in Harlingen, Texas in 1981. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame in 1987.

— JOSEPH F. LAREDO

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Art Direction: Vartan

Design: Mike Fink @ilevel

Photo Credits: Cover: MCA/Decca Files; Back Cover: James J. Kriegsman;

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RECORDS

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1. (We're Gonna) ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK

(Jimmy DeKnight-Max C. Freedman)
Recorded April 12, 1954
Originally Decca single 29124

2. SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL

(Charles Calhoun)
Recorded June 7, 1954
Originally Decca single 29204

3. THIRTEEN WOMEN (And Only One Man In Town)

(Dickie Thompson)
Recorded April 12, 1954
Originally Decca single 29124

4. DIM, DIM THE LIGHTS (I Want Some Atmosphere)

(Beverly Ross-Julius Dixon)
Recorded September 21, 1954
Originally Decca single 29317

5. RUDY'S ROCK

(Bill Haley-Rudy Pompilli)
Recorded March 23, 1956
Originally Decca single 30085

6. RAZZLE DAZZLE

(Charles Calhoun)
Recorded May 10, 1955
Originally Decca single 29552

7. THE SAINTS ROCK 'N' ROLL

(Bill Haley-Milt Gabler)
Recorded September 23, 1955
Originally Decca single 29870

8. SKINNY MINNIE

(Billy Haley-Rusty Keefer-
Milt Gabler-Catherine Cafra)
Recorded February 6, 1958
Originally Decca single 30592

9. R-O-C-K

(Billy Haley-Arrett Rusty Keefer-
Ruth Edna Keefer)
Recorded September 22, 1955
Originally Decca single 29870

10. BURN THAT CANDLE

(Winfield Scott)
Recorded September 23, 1955
Originally Decca single 29713

11. ROCK-A-BEATIN' BOOGIE

(Bill Haley)
Recorded September 22, 1954
Originally Decca single 29713

12. SEE YOU LATER, ALLIGATOR

(Robert Guidry)
Recorded December 12, 1955
Originally Decca single 29791





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